

## Christmas in Pusan, Korea

Mr. W. H. Smith

It was Saturday before Christmas, our church Bible woman came to me and asked if the Korean young people could again meet in our home and have breakfast for the carollers as they did last year. I, of course, said, "Yes," but added that our dining room is very small and that they would have to have sittings of twelve to fifteen in a group. She reminded me that last year there were thirty-six, but this year she felt there would be at least fifty. I gasped at the thought, and asked what they would like to prepare for their breakfast. She told me, and preparations were made accordingly.

That afternoon the Koreans trimmed the large room which we use as an auditorium for the Korean Church and for the G.I.'s who meet here Saturday evenings. The Koreans did marvelously with so little. With white paper and a pair of scissors they had already cut out a beautiful Christmas scene. They asked if they could use one of our grey blankets to paste the scene on! I hesitated a moment and then remembered I had made a large black curtain, and that was just what was needed. This was hung up over the glass sliding doors on one side of the room. So with other paper ornaments and pine branches the room was decorated.

Our Korean helper, Paksi, was busy the whole day before making cookies <sup>for the G.I.'s</sup>. She decorated them with green and red colored sugar, which was given by the mother of one of the American Army nurses. We also made coconut macaroons and chocolate chip cookies. That Saturday evening the G.I.'s met as usual and we all had a fine time of Christian fellowship, carol singing, a short service and then refreshments.

On Monday, the day before Christmas, our home was a beehive of activity. Some were wrapping awards, - notebooks and pencils - for the Sunday-school students. These were for perfect attendance, memorizing verses and bringing others to church and Sunday-school. Others were filling boxes with hard candy and popcorn. The atmosphere was full of expectation. At noon the Bible woman came to tell us that the Korean bread for the women at the POW Camp was ready. This necessitated a trip to the Camp. Were the women delighted when they saw it! After our errand there we returned home.

We then filled our car with 200 packages, - Bibles and hymnbooks, and started to a hospital nearby where there are Korean military patients. The Bible woman told us the patients had no washcloths and wondered if something special could be done for them on Christmas. So we secured a couple bolts of toweling, - very thin but the best we could get in Korea now. This toweling was made by one of the refugees. He insisted on giving us a bolt without cost. I knew the poverty of this young man but nothing I could say would change his mind, - he wanted to give these men a bolt of toweling for washcloths.

This was just a token of God's love to them. As many patients as were able, gathered for a Christmas service. Before it was finished, however, Dr. Chisholm had to leave to give a message at one of the American Army posts.

When we returned home that evening the Christmas carollers had begun coming. Dr. Chisholm and I went in and treated them to some candy. By eleven o'clock many were here. Our Sunday-school superintendent came to tell me so many had come that we would not have enough food for the carollers' breakfast! There was nothing I could do about it at that late hour! The next morning I asked Pakai how many she had for breakfast. "Ninety," she replied. "What in the world did you feed so many?" I asked her. "Soup," she replied. I felt that either she had watered it well, or it was like the widow's barrel of meal! They sang that morning in many different places to the wounded soldiers and to many others who were helped and inspired by these Christmas hymns.

These young folks returned to the church within our house for the morning Christmas service, many of them being Sunday-school teachers. The children began to come early. They were to meet first and have a Christmas service and then receive their awards. They soon filled the house. One of the American nurses had ordered candy and Christmas boxes in which to put the candy. We thought three hundred boxes together with some bags of Korean cookies would be sufficient. However, soon the superintendent came greatly excited, "We do not have enough boxes," he said. One of the Chaplains had given candy bars for the children. It would not do to give to some and not to others. This was a rare treat for the children, many of them being refugees and would probably not taste candy for another year! My, what a crowd! Even several of the window panes had to give way to make room for the children's arms! Then to make matters worse it began to rain. In preparation for the Koreans' Christmas if, too, had ordered sixty pounds of hard candy from Sears, and three hundred candy boxes. The day before Christmas the order still had not come. I prayed, "Lord, I know I was late sending that order, but I know you can get it here in time. Won't you send at least one box (30 lbs.) today." That very day the candy and boxes arrived. Thanks to a faithful God. But thirty pounds of candy for three hundred boxes was not enough. What could we do? A bright idea struck one of us. A friend had sent two barrels of doughnuts which were misshapen, to be disposed of as we thought best. They came just in the nick of time. Why not fill the boxes with doughnuts! So while the children's program was going on, a couple Koreans and myself filled the three hundred boxes! What a relief, because by actual count there were 613 children present. And what an opportunity to

to lead these little ones on to know Him who loves them.

I neglected to say that early Christmas morning before the children's service, Dr. Chisholm and I jumped in our auto and went over to the penitentiary where I had planned to give the women whom I have been teaching the Bible, some bread for Christmas and the little babies who are with their mothers, some little toy and a sample tin of Simalac which had been sent out by a friend from America. Some kind friend had given 250 lbs. of flour for the occasion and I added forty lbs. of sugar and a large tin of powdered eggs and ~~xxxx~~ had a Korean baker make it into sweet bread. I wanted to see if this had gotten to its destination. I found it had not arrived but I had my friend's word that it would surely get to them for Christmas. So, I went into the penitentiary and met the women and told them that I had planned to do, and hoped they would enjoy it. We had prayer and then I left. But before I could reach the door the women brought me a gift. They had made it with their own hands in prison. A Korean woman appropriately dressed, and a Korean man with a jiggy (wooden frame on which he carries his loads) on his back. Also there was a little Santa Claus clothed in a red knitted outfit and a bouquet of white roses made of cotton fastened to foliage not unlike the rose leaf. I valued this much and told them so. Since they were to have the Chaplain take charge of the Christmas service that day and I had already given a Christmas lesson the Thursday before for my Bible study with them, I felt I need not stay. The next time I came for Bible study, however, they had a program all prepared for me and I sat down and listened. God is moving in their hearts. Two have been released and have visited our home. I want to send one to Bible school if possible.

When these women are released from prison it is a problem because many have no homes to return to, and unless there is someone who will sympathetically help them, the temptations are great. How I wish I had a home, or a building where they might come until work might be secured for them, or until they are grounded in the Word of God. Pray for these women. Dr. Chisholm and I were saying this morning if we could secure several sewing machines we could no doubt start a self-help department for these women and also for the girls in the Bible Institute. In the latter, there are many poor and worthy girls who come and need work to help them earn their way through. In such an over-populated city where thousands and thousands of refugees have come, it is not so easy to get work of the proper kind. Help of this kind would prove a great blessing. After our trip to the penitentiary we returned home and our children's services about which I have told you, began

We had just finished putting doughnuts in the boxes for the Sunday-school children, when Dr. Chisholm called and said it was time to go to the Prisoners-of-War Camp. The afternoon before, we had taken the boxes of Korean bread to the women. We had interviewed the Security Officer of the Camp who was most helpful and told us to do anything we wished to make the women happy. How grateful they were for the bread and appreciative of our efforts! I had packed boxes of hard candy for twenty little children who were there. This was delivered the evening before as I have already mentioned. The men were less fortunate than the women because there were so many that we could not possibly secure this treat for them. However, each Christian studying in the Bible classes was given a pencil with an eraser, and a notebook. There were about 700 of them. Now we must leave for the Christmas service at the Camp. Doctor took me to the women's compound and he went to one of the men's compounds.

I wish you could have been with me as I entered the room in which these Christian women were meeting. They had met in a tent but now for the first time they were meeting in a building with a galvanized iron roof. The walls were made of mud brick, the floor was dirt and there were several crude windows and two doors, one on either side of the building. It was a long building partitioned off by canvas into three rooms. The church was at the upper end. There was a blowing rain beating down on the compound which was mostly clay. Although I walked but a very few feet to the door, my overshoes were heavy with the clinging sticky clay mud. I opened the door. The strong wind blowing on my back fairly pushed me into the room. The blowing of the wind against a loose piece of galvanized iron covering the end window behind the crude pulpit made a persistent clanging noise, rising from the softer sound of wind and rain on the iron roof. But, oh, my heart was filled with praise! There seated on benches were 101 women listening eagerly to the messenger who was standing behind the pulpit. The choir was seated on benches at the right of the pulpit and a little Estey organ faced them. The women all turned to greet me as I entered. Embarrassed at the interruption I seated myself quickly and bowed my head. How could I praise God enough for this sight! A year ago there were none whom I knew to be real Christians, ~~xxxxxxx~~ Now many were gathered to sing God's praises and listen to His Word. The preacher was the principal of the Bible Institute which has been established there. Years ago he had heard the Gospel through Dr. Chisholm's ministry in Syen Chun. He afterwards went to Seminary in Pyeng Yeng and we called him the "Southern Orator." He had come to Pusan just when the way opened to start a Bible Institute at the Camp.

We knew God had sent him. Oh! what a blessing he has been teaching the Word of God to both the men and women. How eagerly these women are studying, and they didn't want any vacation! There are now thirty-five women enrolled in the school. The women have their early morning prayer-meeting and each evening gather for worship. They are learning the joy of seeing God answer prayer. We now have two Korean women working among them. Both are seminary students. One of them, years ago, attended the school which we had in Syen Chun for poor children. We used this girl when attending school found Christ as her Saviour. to call it our "University." It is interesting to note that the teacher who saved her from being sold by her mother into a life of slavery recently came to Pusan. His escape from the North reminds one of Hebrews 11.

But to get back to Christmas day, after the sermon was over, the leader asked if there were any who wished to sing or say a word! There was a silence and then a woman of middle age arose and said in substance, "I have been used to living in a brick house with plenty. For years I was a "chipsa" (deaconess) in the church. I called myself a Christian. But I was not a Christian; I did not know what being a Christian really meant. I was brought here to the Camp. I have come to know the meaning of being born again. I am happier here in these days of physical discomfort than I ever have been. I thank God for bringing me here where I have come to know Christ and to study God's Word. It is heaven to me."

The testimony of many of these girls are wonderfully interesting. Many, we believe, have come into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. There are still many without Him. Many are also being terrified by the communists and are afraid to take a stand for Jesus Christ. Pray for them.

After this middle aged woman gave her testimony the meeting continued<sup>on</sup>. The leader read the Christmas story as given in Matthew and Luke while I illustrated several scenes with beautiful felt pictures. Dr. Chisholm in the meantime came to take me with him to the Men's Compound. <sup>Christian</sup> The leader of that Compound wanted him to be sure to be there because the Colonel<sup>the Camp Commander</sup> was coming. So we left.

It was still raining hard. The choir director put the Estey organ in the back of our Chevy, and he, Dr. Chisholm and I drove out of the Women's Compound to the high berbed wire enclosure of the Men's Compound. The guard opened the gate for us and we entered. It was already getting dark. We made our way through the clay mud, pools of water, up little knolls and finally reached the tent being used for a church. It too was decorated. Pictures were drawn on the front of the tent in chalk and the lines were covered with soft white cotton. Santa Claus was driving reindeer to a beautiful little church building in the midst of soft falling snow. The<sup>mixed</sup> choir which sang at the women's camp were seated on benches on the platform

with the Estey organ before them. They sang several selections from the Messiah. The leader asked me to sit on the platform with Dr. Chisholm and the Colonel when he should arrive.

After several hymns from the U.W. yearbook in which are both English and Korean hymns, Dr. Chisholm arose to speak. Soon the Colonel came. Dr. G. stopped and asked one of the Korean Christians to give a word of greeting. He paid the Colonel a fine tribute of which he was worthy without doubt. He said in substance that he thanked him for his kindness and his help to them. Then he added, "If we had been your own sons you could not have treated us more kindly." The Colonel then arose and told them that he hoped that they might soon be returned to the place of their own choice.

When the Colonel first came in he leaned over and told us he was sorry to be late, but said the General had come and he couldn't leave. However, he finally told him he had promised to be at this meeting, as he left. The Colonel is a fine gentleman one who has the good of the POW's at heart. After he spoke Dr. Chisholm continued his message. He spoke of Christ being Very God and mentioned among other evidences, the raising of Lazarus from the dead. He told of an elderly minister in America who asked him why it was that when Christ raised Lazarus from the dead that he specified "Lazarus." "Why did He say, 'Lazarus' come forth?" "Well," said Dr. Chisholm, "I suppose it was because he wanted to raise him from the dead." "No, no, you don't know. Listen to me. If Christ had not specified 'Lazarus' in particular, the whole graveyard would have come forth." The Koreans laughed heartily at this, and the Colonel leaned over and asked me what they were laughing at. I then told him, and from that point on I interpreted to him the message which Dr. G. was giving in the Korean language. It was a simple message, which if accepted and believed, anyone could have obtained salvation. For me, this was an unexpected pleasure. I had not counted on preaching to the Colonel!

After the service was over, the notebooks and pencils were given out. But because we had another service at our own church we had to leave. Going out into the darkness of that muddy compound where had been going on a building program, might have brought disaster to our clothes had we made the wrong step, if not to our flesh and bones! But one of the POW's had made a paper lantern in which was placed a candle. He led the way, and by this candle light we made our way to the big gate where there were electric lights. The gate was again opened and we got into our auto. What a blessed time we had that day with our Christian friends.

We arrived home just in time to remove our coats, wash our hands and hurry

down to the church service. The children's service with its interesting program had just finished, the older folks were there. They asked me to show the felt pictures as again one of our men told the story simply of the birth of Christ as given in Matthew and Luke. Dr. Chisholm had had a full day and so had I. Mr. Malsbary was out all day with his choir singing in many places. When we came into our little church service there ~~xxxx~~ seated in the corner of the room were two American soldiers. They come regularly to our Saturday evening meetings for the G.I.'s. They said they had been there since 3:30 P.M. and had seen the children's program three different times! ,once when they were practising, then again when given before the young folks, and now again when part of it was given before the adults. They laughed and said to me, "We have just been saying to each other that although we are far from home, yet we believe this is the best Christmas we have had." I don't know what they meant by that remark, unless it was that they were happy in the Lord.

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